

FOR VISUAL READERS
TOON BOOKS®



Questions and activities by: Francisca Goldsmith
 Francisca Goldsmith wrote the Readers' Advisory Guide to Graphic Novels (ALA Editions) and has served on the Eisner, Alex, and Odyssey Award juries. Francisca was the Director of Halifax (N.S.) Public Library and managed collection development for Berkeley (CA) Public Library.

BIRDSONG

by James Sturm

Hardcover ISBN: 9781935179948

TOON BOOKS LEVEL ONE

Guided Reading Level = WB

ELA COMMON CORE STANDARDS (GRADES K-1)

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS		CRAFT AND STRUCTURE	
<p>Look at the cover and opening pages. What do you think this story will be about? Where will it take place? How do you think it will make you feel?</p> <p>On p. 5, what are the children doing? Talk about their body language and facial expressions. What kind of mood do they seem to be in? Would you want to meet them?</p>	<p>RL.K.1 RL.1.1</p>	<p>Talk about the setting on p. 29. Pay close attention to the words on the signs. What do they tell you about the way the “chimp children” are being treated? Do you think this is fair?</p> <p>Define the word <i>empathy</i>. Ask students to describe instances when characters from <i>Birdsong</i> who show empathy. What is the opposite of empathy? Ask students to talk about characters who fail to be empathetic.</p>	<p>RL.K.4 RL.1.4</p>
<p>How do the children end up at the top of the mountain? Whom do they meet there? On pages 9-15, how does the artist use color to focus our attention on the bird? Can you find any visual clues that tell us that the old man and the bird are somehow connected?</p> <p>How do the animals feel when they are threatened by the tiger? What do the hunters do with the animals? Do you think this is the right thing to do?</p>	<p>RL.K.2 RL.1.2</p>	<p>Talk to students about the different ways to communicate a story. Discuss oral tradition, written books, illustrated books. Introduce <i>kamishibai</i>, the Japanese method of story telling that uses pictures and spoken word and is performed. Refer to <i>About Kamishibai</i> on p. 54 for more details. Explain that the narrative can change from storyteller to storyteller, and encourage students to be creative while they read.</p>	<p>RL.K.5 RL.1.5</p>
<p>What are the two animals doing on p. 37? How do the children use the stick on p. 7? How do they use a stick on page p. 43? What do these details tell us about the ways they have changed?</p> <p>On p. 40, why do you think the bird returns? After the bird returns, how does the mood of the story change? Look for and discuss changes in the artwork that tell us that the story is coming to an end.</p>	<p>RL.K.3 RL.1.3</p>	<p>Compare the <i>kamishibai</i> format of <i>Birdsong</i> to a traditional picture book. You may even want to make the differences explicit by contrasting the two books in a side-by-side manner. In <i>Birdsong</i>, why do you think the author left a blank page in each spread?</p>	
		<p>On pp. 31 and 33 how do the animals feel about their new home? How can you tell? the animals are looking out. Whom do you think they are looking at? (possible answers include the taskmaster, or the audience of the show or the reader.) How does make one feel when someone looks at you?</p>	<p>RL.K.6 RL.1.6</p>

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INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

The children turn into animals that look like chimpanzees, but have tails like monkeys. (Chimpanzees don't have tails.) Explain this to students, then ask: Why would the author choose to draw an animal that doesn't exist, a mythical creature, for this story?

RL.K.7
RL.1.7

Ask students if they know any other stories that involve a character's transformation from human to animal. Some examples could be *The Princess and the Frog*, *Beauty and the Beast*, or the Greek myth of Arachne. In those stories, why and how do the characters change into animals? How is the story of *Birdsong* different?

RL.K.9
RL.1.9

Kamishibai is not the only storytelling tradition that uses pictures without written words. Another example of a wordless storytelling tradition is African-American quilt stories. In this tradition, scenes are recorded on squares and then sewn together to form a story—and a quilt! For more about story quilts, see Faith Ringgold's "Street Story Quilt" at <http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/d36.htm>

SPEAKING AND LISTENING / WRITING

Ask students to discuss in groups: How did they feel when they saw the children's treatment of the bird and the turtle at the beginning of the story? How do they think the bird and the turtle felt? Did the children deserve to be turned into animals? How do you think the animals feel as they build their new home towards the end of the story?

SL.K.2
SL.1.2
SL.K.4
SL.1.4

What happens to the children that changes the way they treat the turtle and the bird at the end of the story? Do you think that the animals change into birds once they hear the birdsong? How do we change by listening to others? What do you think the characters have learned?

Revisit pages 9-19, and ask students to tell what is happening through different points of view. How would they tell the story if they were the boy, the girl, the red bird, or the old man? Ask students to choose a character and act out the story from his/her perspective, paying attention to what their character is thinking and feeling.

Ask students to talk about their pets or favorite animals they have met. If they could be any animal themselves, which would they be and why? Ask them to create their own series of pictures about themselves as an animal and perform it for the class.

WK.K.3
WK.1.3

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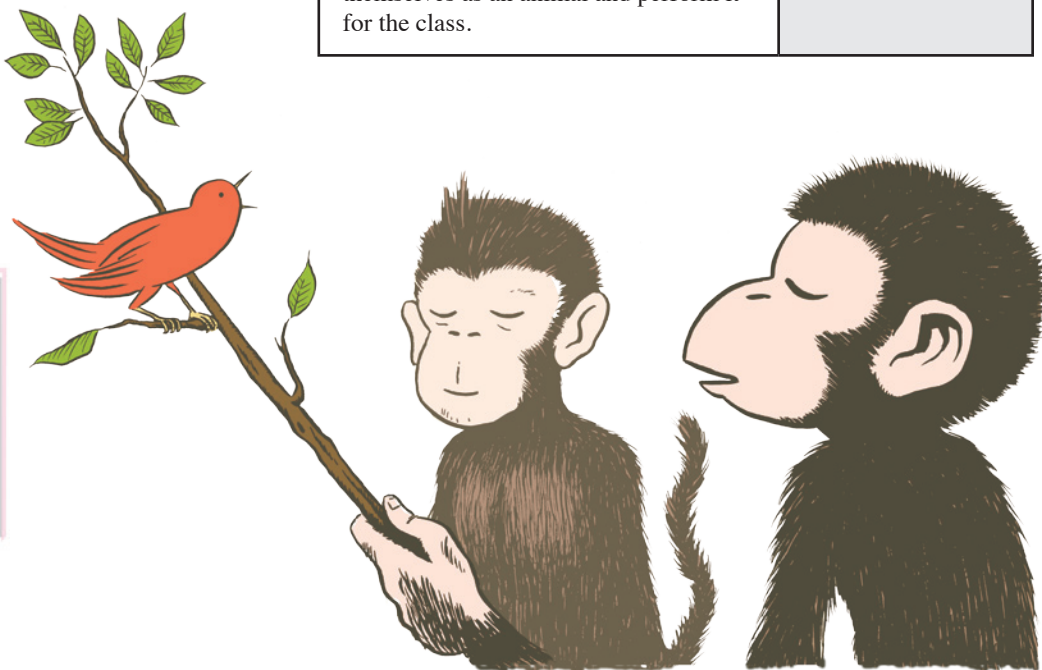
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BIRDSONG ACTIVITY SHEET

Name: _____

Date: _____



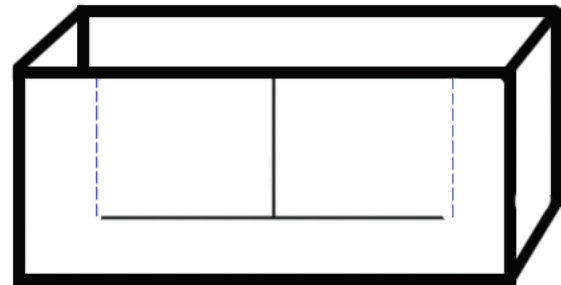
Kamishibai is the Japanese storytelling tradition that uses pictures, but no written words, to tell a story. Follow the steps below to build your own *kamishibai* stage from an old shoebox!

1. Draw your own *kamishibai* cards. Each card should show one scene from your story. Make sure that each card is the same size as the long side of your shoebox.

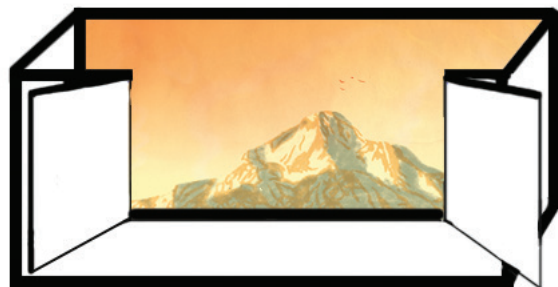
2. Cut a line down the center of the shoebox. Then cut two lines towards each corner.



3. Fold back the flaps outwards along the dotted blue lines so that they look like two doors.



4. Place your *kamishibai* card on the inside of the "stage" so that your audience can see the image. Now you can perform your story like a real *kamishibai* man!



Bonus: For more about *kamishibai* storytelling, read Allen Say's book *Kamishibai Man* (2005).

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BIRDSONG ACTIVITY SHEET



Name: _____

Date: _____

Find each of these characters in the book and make a list of all the details you see. Are their facial expressions important? How about their actions?

page #	the animal children	the turtle	the red bird	the circus trainer

Bonus: Which character would you want to have as a friend? Why? When you explain your answer, be sure to use the details you saw in the pictures!



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